

teaching both signed language and written English to children who are deaf. Chapter 6 focuses on diversity and deaf education, highlighting the changing nature of deaf education due to the implementation of universal newborn hearing screening in NSW. The 7th and final chapter considers disability activism and the role of service providers. The author concludes by highlighting the internal fragmentation of deaf education throughout the decades.

This book is a by-product of the author's doctoral dissertation, and although mostly well-written, often reads like a thesis. While the historical overview is most interesting, sometimes the text presents as a series of facts with less than optimal cohesion. The comprehensive endnotes were, at times, more interesting than the text itself. The author is a consulting historian for The Shepherd Centre in Sydney, Australia; a centre that embraces auditory-verbal philosophy and pedagogical practices, which explains the surplus of text attributed to that centre.

This is essential work with helpful facts; however, at times, an element of subjectivity surfaces. For example, the author writes, "The success of the early intervention centres can be seen in First Voice's report in early 2017, which states that 95 per cent of respondents to its survey attended a mainstream high school with 86 per cent completing it" (p. 188). There are a few concerns about this statement, one of which is that the outcomes reflect centres outside of NSW. Another matter is that the author is aligned with First Voice via her relationship with the Shepherd Centre. First Voice is an affiliated organisation that provide listening and spoken language services for children who are deaf or hard of hearing; the Shepherd Centre is a member of First Voice. This author-agency relationship raising questions of bias as to why other illustrations of 'success' were not promoted more in the book.

My perspective is that the education of children who are deaf or hard of hearing in NSW is not one characterised by fragmentation as suggested by the author (p. 89) but evolving as the sector learns to respect individual rights and choice and as behavioural science and hearing science continue to confirm evidence-based practice.

This book will make an excellent gift for educators of children who are deaf and historians. Subject matter experts are encouraged to read Dr Malone's (2017) doctoral thesis because it has dozens of reports cited, most which delve deep into this complex topic.

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Stranded nation: White Australia in an Asian region

Edited by David Walker

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In an insightful passage from his early work, cultural critic Žižek (1989) presents an account of how ideology functions through fantasy to cohere an image of society as a harmonious whole. Of course, the very idea of society – any society – being a "harmonious whole" would strike the

readers of this journal as laughably ahistorical. Yet to simply dismiss those who might call up such a vision of society as suffering from “false consciousness” or as plainly idiotic is to perhaps miss the point. As Žižek (1989) points out, what is at stake in such a social-ideological fantasy is “to construct a vision of society which *does* exist” (p. 142). In other words, in treating adherents of such a view as being wrongheaded, we misread a normative assertion for an intellectual mistake, a political project for an epistemological error. For those who invoke a harmonious society are not reporting on what *is*. They are making a case for what they *desire*. And what, in such romantic accounts, stands between the society that actually exists and the desired society? The foreign body – that figure of the imagination that embodies paradoxical qualities, and is hence an object both of envy and aversion. Žižek (1989) illustrates this with reference to that oft-invoked foreign body of the early-to-mid 20th century Europe – the mythical figure of “the Jew”. Žižek (1989) suggests that: “Jew” is a fetish which simultaneously denies and embodies the structural impossibility of [the perfect] “Society” (p. 142).

If the Europe of that time traded heavily in the fetishistic figure of “the Jew” as a way of displacing its deeply unresolved social fissures, then the Australia of the twentieth century can be said to have an Asian fetish. And to this case David Walker’s latest offering *Stranded Nation* offers up ample evidence, as did its prequel *Anxious Nation* (1999). Focusing primarily on the period from the 1930s–70s in this latest work, Walker has assembled a large assortment of historical material – from the public statements of political leaders to the private memos of public servants and diplomats, from newspaper reports to cultural texts like novels and illustrations – and crafted a highly readable account of how Australia has sought to come to terms with its “near North”. Of pertinence to Australian education scholars is Walker’s key point that the push for “Asia literacy”, though formally coined in those terms in 1988, has a genealogy that reaches at least a century prior and became seen as a matter of urgency in the post-war period of Asian decolonisation, economic growth and the Cold War. What should this Asia literacy involve? And indeed, what constitutes this “Asia” that Australians are supposed to be literate about? The varied, shifting, confused, sometimes paroxysmic responses to these questions are what Walker’s book charts. Throughout the text, the author underscores how the Asia that is so often the object of public and policy discourse is “an Asia manufactured in Australia and informed by Australian historical experience” (p. 7). The Asia that emerges from the Australian imagination of this period is a site of both fascination and fear, a proximate source of potential bonanza and unwelcome hordes. It is, in short, a fantasy. In relation to this, Australia – whose identity as a White British outpost had come to a crisis with Britain’s reorientation to Europe – began to rebrand as a self-important “bridge” between Asia and the West. The author insightfully terms this recurrent oscillation between nervousness and celebration of Australia’s geographical location in the Asia-Pacific region “the Australian paradox” (p. 15), and throughout this work he shows how it played itself out starkly (and sometimes quite humorously) in the mid-twentieth century in Australia’s attempts to present itself as a “good neighbour” to Asian nations while maintaining an anti-Asian immigration policy.

The book is divided into three parts. The first – “Pacific Imaginaries” – charts over five chapters the cacophony of calls by the 1930s for Australians to “know Asia” considering Australia’s geographical location. This yearning to know is animated by the recognition of Australia’s growing economic interdependence with Asia, as well as its desire to secure its position as the leader of the Asia-Pacific region on the basis of its White prestige. As with many engaging historians, Walker weaves these larger, more abstract forces and sensibilities through the biographies of select individuals who embody different positions within the conjuncture. What strikes the reader as unique is his attention to more minor figures like broadcasters Paul MacGuire and Frank Clune, who though by no means unimportant in their time, often do not rate a mention compared to the usual cast of characters in Australian history textbooks like the long-serving Robert Menzies and (maybe) Arthur Calwell. One such

minor character – Frederic Eggleston, a policy wonk turned Menzies’s wartime emissary to China – is mentioned by Walker as typifying the Australian position that was stubbornly repeated for decades: that White Australia’s racial homogeneity was the reason for its “remarkably tolerant society” (p. 49); and that “understanding Asia” would secure Australia’s position as a strategic bridge between East and West (pp. 49-50). Of course, as Walker is wont to remind the reader throughout the book, Asia was never quite taken by the professed friendliness or charming metaphor.

The following five chapters of the book make up the second part – “Volatile Minds” – most of which explores various Australian government initiatives in the 1950s and 1960s designed to respond to a decolonising and increasingly assertive Asia. Again, figures like Menzies appear briefly then recede to the background. So do many towering names often associated with the era of the Bandung Conference like Sukarno, Zhou Enlai and Jawaharlal Nehru who are given ample treatment in other books, for example Ramachandra Guha’s edited collection *Makers of Modern Asia* (2014). More attention is paid by Walker to how these figures and events were perceived by Australian diplomats and mid-level officials, who were in the thick of formulating Australia’s response to a region whose determination to move beyond the shadow of European colonialism caused some degree of unease to White nations. Of unique interest in this part of the book is Walker’s detour through “Biggles” – a then-popular book series aimed at young readers featuring a fictional pilot-adventurer. Walker highlights how the Orientalist tropes that recur in the Asian characters that Biggles encounters were presented as “racial knowledge”: “This was just how the East thought and behaved” (p. 174). While some historians might consider such an extended detour into kids’ storybooks an unnecessary diversion, Walker draws subtle threads to show how the assumptions that undergirded policy and diplomacy of the time – the imperative to decode the “Asian mind” – were of the same ilk. Of note too is the author’s account of Radio Australia broadcasts and the Cheap Books program – both of which were burdened with the task of projecting an image of Australia as a “friendly neighbour” into Asia despite the persistence of the White Australia policy – with the latter initiative failing for reasons that can only be described as historical tragicomedy.

The final five chapters of the book that form part three – “Asian Voices” – pays attention to the views and lives of Asian visitors to Australia. While visits by well-known political leaders of the period like the President of South Vietnam Ngo Dinh Diem and Japanese Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi are covered, Walker again gives space in this part to the lesser known figures from the time (at least from the perspective of the present). The opinions and experiences of such characters as the outspoken General K. M. Carriappa, a former Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Armed Forces who was appointed as the High Commissioner to Australia by Nehru, as well as many journalists of the Asian Visitors program and students of the Colombo Plan, highlight critical Asian voices from within Australia. In conjunction with Asian criticisms from without, these voices gave lie to White Australia’s insistence that it was a good, friendly neighbour in a position to lead the region, or to be a bridge, while holding fast onto an immigration policy that was clearly targeted at keeping Asians out. This paradoxical position was also not helped by the incredible sensitivity and overreaction in public discourse by any criticism of the White Australia policy, as Walker’s coverage of the furore surrounding Carriappa’s mildly disparaging comment – “We are of the [Commonwealth] family, yet we are not wanted” (p. 335) – served to demonstrate.

There is much detail in Walker’s well-researched book to get lost in, and the reader is offered multiple diversions along the way that eventually flow into a compelling picture of a nation that found itself increasingly at odds with its neighbours because it was, in the final instance, at odds with itself. Swinging wildly between an enthusiasm to profit from rising Asia on the one hand and on the other, the easily kindled because ever-latent fear of an Asian invasion, this manifested in the increasingly awkward position of constantly reiterating its neighbourliness to Asia while doggedly pursuing a policy of restrictive anti-Asian

immigration. This reader was regularly reminded when reading this book of how “Asia” and “Asians” have functioned in Australian history as that fantastical foreign body that, as Žižek argues, allows for the displacement of the inner antagonisms of a society. This was none more obvious than in Australian retorts to Asian criticisms of Australia’s treatment of its Indigenous population, which involved greasy blame-shifting: “It was argued that White Australia had absolutely no prejudice towards Aboriginal people; on the contrary, and rather sadly it was intimated, the Aboriginal people themselves were the problem” (p. 444). Much like it was asserted, by Menzies no less, that “colour prejudice was an imported disease whose carriers. . . were the Asian immigrants themselves” (p. 449).

According to Žižek (1989), a key step in working through the vexing knot of such a social fantasy is to identify fully with its symptom – that fetishised figure that it has produced to displace its own antagonisms and tensions – by recognising how the properties attributed to that figure are the necessary product of its very own society. One must, in short, recognise in the “excesses” attributed to the foreign body the truth about oneself (Žižek, 1989, p. 144). That the persistent Australian image of Asians as potential invaders who were colour prejudiced, racially antagonistic, avaricious and volatile as catalogued in this book suggests that there was much that Australia needed to work through as it edged into the late-20th century. “Yet down to the 1970s”, Walker laments, “there was scarcely any awareness that knowing Asia required a corresponding self-knowledge” (p. 457).

Have the lessons since been learnt? Has Australia worked through its Asian fantasies, which is to also have reckoned with its own unresolved issues? Surveying the terrain of public discourse in Australia at the time of this review in 2019–20, one can perhaps still detect the lingering shadow of the Australian paradox in the vacillating public commentaries on Asia and Asians. For instance, on the one hand, the desire to profit from bountiful Chinese markets and its burgeoning middle class; and on the other, periodic panics about insidious Chinese spies, dishonest Chinese international students, and so on. And amidst all this is Australia’s insistent self-regard as a “middle power” able to mediate between global powers’ claims on trade and sovereignty, even as it evades its own difficult questions of rising economic inequality and Aboriginal sovereignty. In light of this, Walker’s book might be suitably recommended as a timely history of the present.

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